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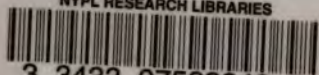
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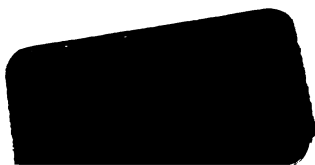
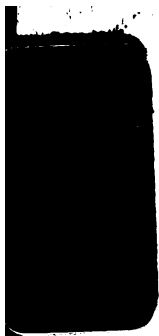
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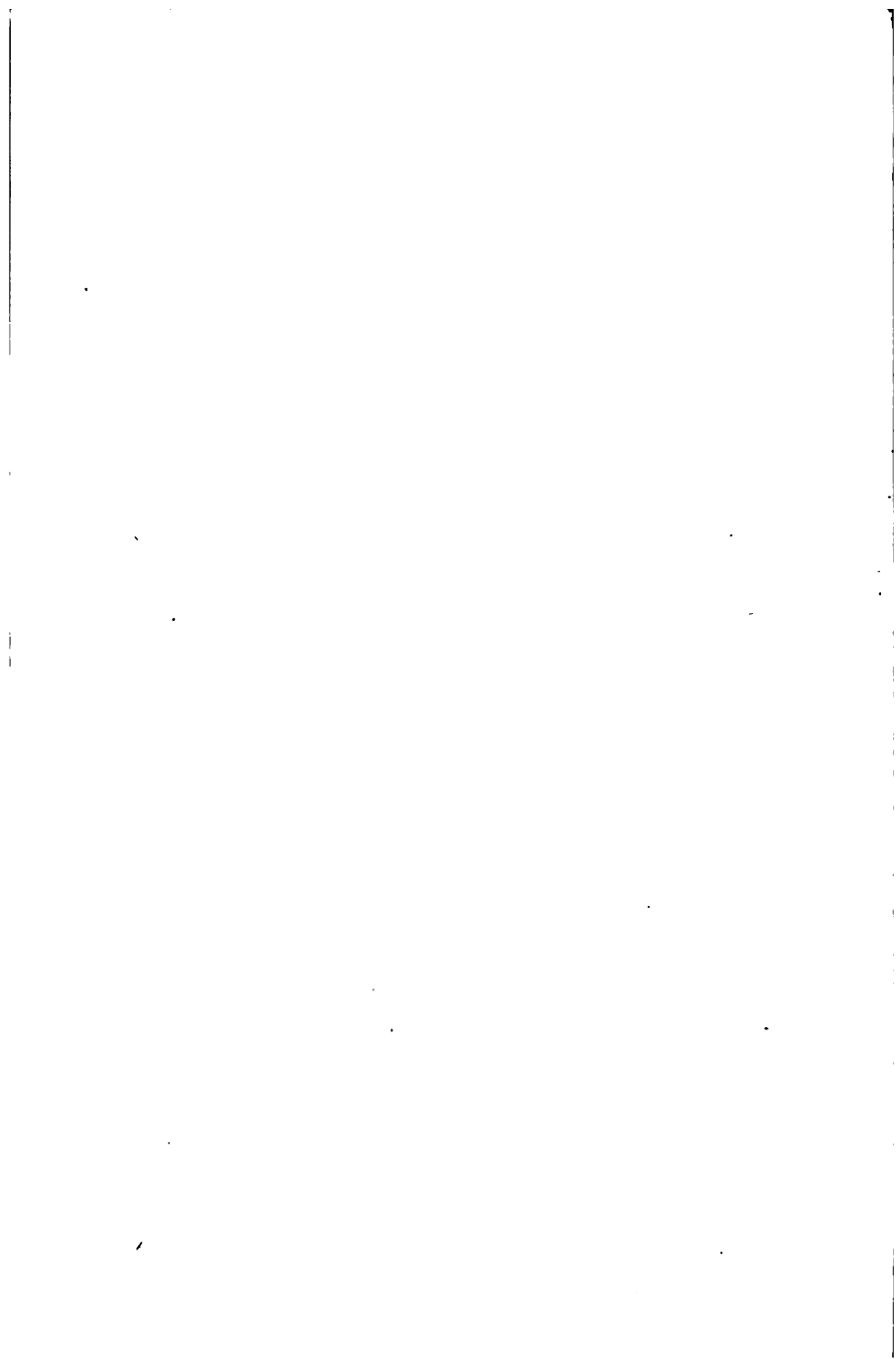
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ROBERT OF WOODLEIGH
AND
OTHER POEMS
—•—•—•—•—
PHILIP STONER



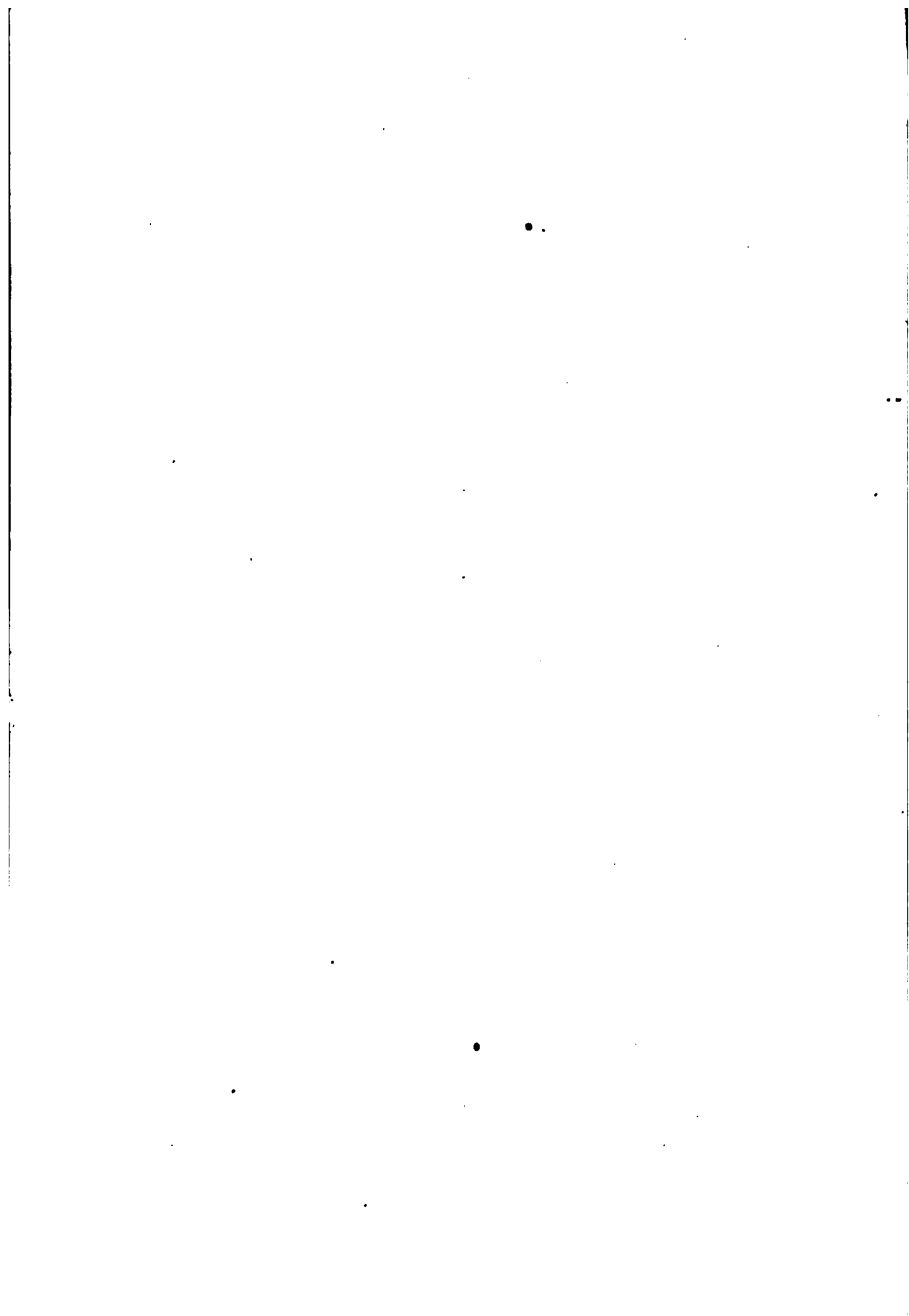
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ROBERT OF WOODLEIGH

AND

Other Poems.

BY

PHILIP STONER.

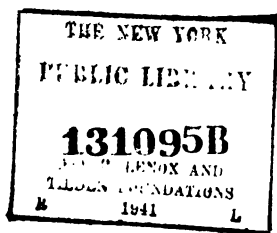


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TO MY FRIEND,

E. A. SOTHERN, Esq.,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR,

PHILIP STONER.

WQ 19 FEB 36



PROEMIAL.

WHEN poesy first woke within my breast,
Its gentle murmur left a vague unrest:

A passion grew upon me day by day—
A yearning after something far away.

•
Oft, ere these numbers rude were rudely trac'd,
I wrote a name on high—'twas e'er effac'd!

The boon I crav'd, I deem'd the world denied,
And in the bitterness of soul I cried:

“Must pen be dipt in flame to write a name
Eternally upon the scroll of Fame?

I'd better be a lout with obscure name,
And plod through life with unimpassion'd soul,
Than have this constant longing after fame,
Yet coming none the nearer to the goal.

I'd better have my life a simple story;
I'd better be the lowest of the lowly,
Than have this eager, burning thirst for glory,
And see it nearing not at all, or slowly."

This truth I've learn'd: "Than never, better late."
There are no fairer words than "Work and wait."

If in these pages aught you find to blame—
Where numbers halt, or feebly burns the flame,
Be generous, and censure light the part;
Pray, deem it lack of genius, more than heart.

NEW YORK CITY, *January*, 1872.



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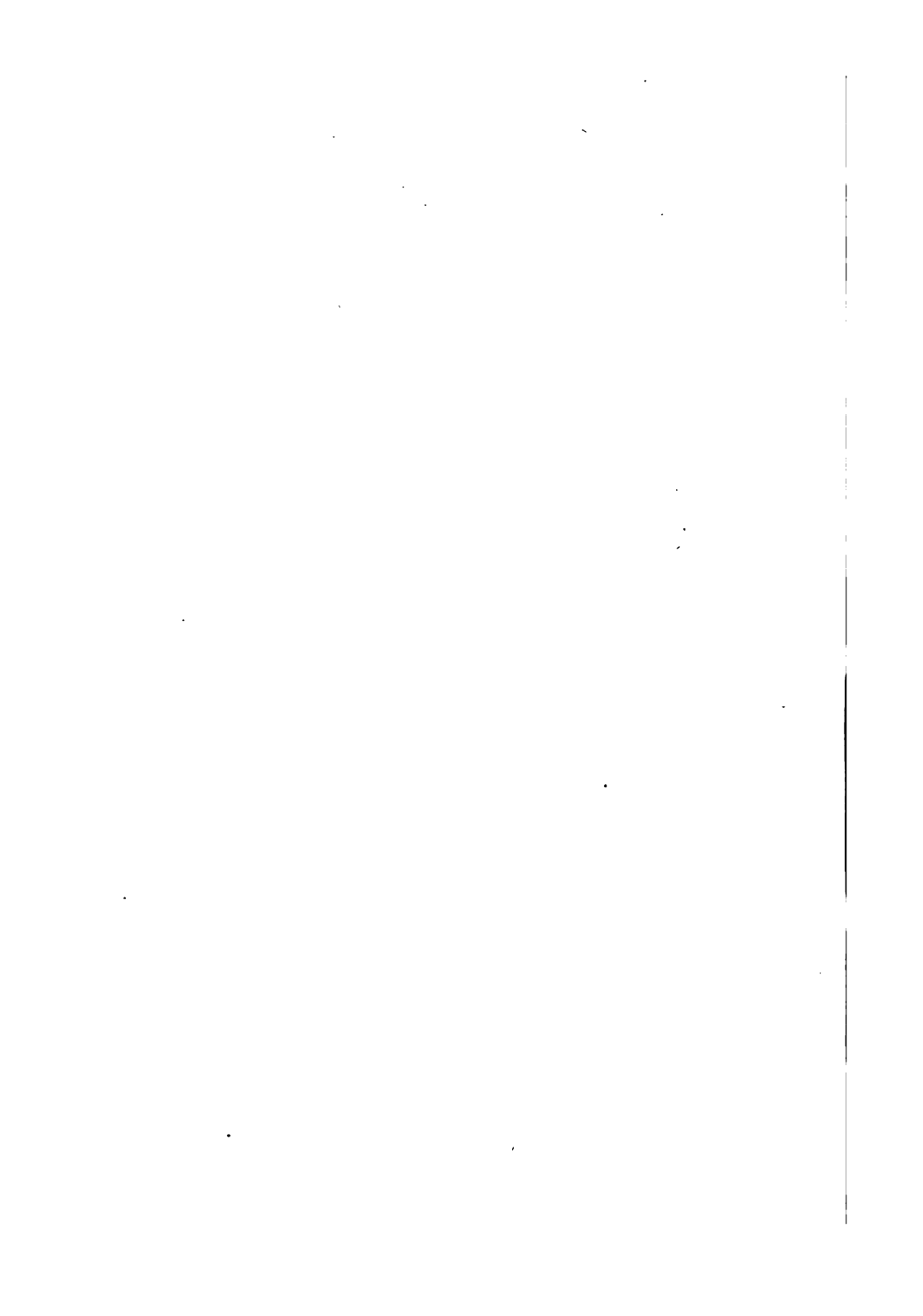
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ROBERT OF WOODLEIGH.





ROBERT OF WOODLEIGH.

A POEM.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART I.

EXILED.

DEEP in the bosom of Virginia hills
There lay a tiny lake, whose placid breast,
Surrounded by a panoply of pines,
Was ruffled never by the ruder blasts
Which, ever and anon, swept o'er the heights.
Toward the north, upon a single hill,
Above the crests of evergreen, arose
The Convent's ivied walls and turrets gray;
Toward the west the grim, dark forest lay
Upon a thousand wave-like mountain-tops.

The waters of the eastern border bathed
The rocky feet of overhanging cliffs,
Whose haughty summits pierced the very sky,
And frown'd their shadows on the glassy lake;
While to the south, upon a green, which sloped
Toward the lake, the front of Woodleigh Hall
Was dimly seen amid a grove of pines.
Beyond, a valley, rich in growing grain,
And rip'ning fruit, and fields of pasture rare,
And bubbling springs, and silver rivulets,
In all the beauty of an Eden lay.

At Woodleigh dwelt Judge Leeson and his sons—
Robert, the eldest, tall, and dark, and proud;
And Maurice, fair, and slight, and delicate;
And though the Judge was father to them both,
They yet were not full brothers. Either claim'd
A mother for himself—both now in Heav'n.

At Woodleigh, with the Leesons, liv'd a maid—
A kinswoman of Leeson's latest wife.
And she was very fair to look upon;
And both the sons loved her; and she loved both,

And could not choose which brother pleas'd her
most.

For she was fond of praise—as who is not?—
And either by her side, the other gone,
She deem'd the present lord of all her heart.
And life was in its Spring, and love was young,
And love made all her heart a joyous song.

L'ALLEGRA.

(*Joy.*)

“ALL nature sweetly smiles around;
In all the air is heard the hum
Of joyous life, and from the ground
The flowers tell that Spring has come.
The swallow gossips in the sky,
The humming bee is on the wing,
And gentle breezes, drifting by,
From southern climes sweet odors bring.

“The wood resounds with song of birds,
The brook is singing in the vale;

And tinkling bells of browsing herds
Are echoed back from hill and dale.
The apple-blossoms lightly dance,
The meads are spangled o'er with dew;
And, rev'ling in the sun's bright glance,
The cloudlets play in fields of blue.

"My heart is like the sweet spring-time—
Upon a golden flood I drift;
For youth and hope are in their prime,
And love makes youthful blood run swift.
No cloud obscures my future sky,
My sails are blown by zephyrs sweet;
A fairy-land is flitting by,
And love sits, smiling, at my feet."

Now Maurice linger'd ever by her side,
And prais'd her azure eyes, and golden hair;
But Robert kept his passion in his heart,
For he was proud, and would not bring himself
To speak—though love betray'd him thro' his eyes.
And Rodney Gray—for he was Robert's friend—
Oft counsel'd Robert to reveal his love,

And learn her heart; that if she loved him not,
Another he might seek to be his wife.

But Robert—for he loved her—answer'd "Wait!"

But Amy Winthrope, after many days,
Began to weary of the younger son;
For he was ever with her, pressing her
To listen to his plea and be his wife.
And often when the time dragg'd heavily—
For, being gently rear'd, her idle hours
Were many—would she steal away alone,
To wander o'er the farm.

One spot she loved—
A rising knoll, which might have been a wave
Left by the Flood, so gently did it slope.
Upon the left a path crept to its foot,
And mingled with the wide and dusty road,
Which, like a serpent, wound among the hills.
Upon the right broad fields of waving grain
Lay rip'ning in the sun. And here, beneath
The shade of overhanging vines, she loved
To dream away the drowsy summer-hours,

Until the sun fell slowly down the west,
And daylight waned, and night came on apace.

It chanc'd that when the grain was fully ripe,
Reclining on the slope, she watch'd the men,
With sun brown'd faces, reaping in the fields.
And Robert Leeson reap'd among the men,
For since his sire had grown in years, the care
And burden of the farm had fall'n to him;
And though too proud to speak his dearest wish
To one he fear'd would spurn his proffer'd love,
He deem'd not honest toil a want of pride.
And as he walk'd with measur'd tread, and reap'd
The grain, he humm'd a plaintive air; which, caught
Upon the breeze, was wafted to the hill.

THE REAPER'S SONG.

"Come hither, gentle summer-breeze,
And list to what I say;
The sun is hot, the hours are long,
My heart is sad to-day.

"Come hither, gentle summer-breeze,
And cool my burning brow,
And whisper softly in my ear
If Amy loves me now.

"Go, seek her in her lone retreat;
Hide in her golden hair,
And learn her heart: if vacant still,
Oh! breathe my image there.

"Or, haste away to Cupid's bower,
And bid him lend a dart,
And dip 't in violets' perfume,
And strike it in her heart.

"Oh! hasten, gentle summer-breeze;
Now, heed thee what I say:
The sun is hot, the hours are long,
My heart is sad to-day."

Now Amy saw that he was strong and lithe—
The fairest reaper in the harvest-field;
And as she watch'd his form bend gracefully,
And heard his song, her bosom rose and fell
Like waving meadow-grass in summer-time,

And then she knew that he had all her heart.
And long she mused, as in a waking dream,
Nor moved until the reapers homeward turn'd.
And slowly fell the sun behind the hills,
And daylight waned, and darkness fill'd the land.

Still Robert's love spoke only from his eyes;
But when he saw that Amy seem'd to watch
His coming home at eve, and crimson flush'd,
If e'er he took her hand or spoke her name,
New courage quickly sprung within his heart,
And once again he counsel'd with his friend.
Now Rodney Gray had come to say farewell.
The captain of a foreign ship had come
To be his father's guest, and Rodney pleas'd
The captain, that he proffer'd him a place
Upon his ship, and opportunity
To cross the sea and visit foreign climes.
And Rodney's father, loth to lose his son,
Had but consented after many prayers.
And now he'd come to bid his friend farewell,
And urg'd him, if he held his pleasure aught,
To speak his love and Amy take to wife,
That when his friend was far across the sea

He still might have a friend as dear as he.
Then Robert promis'd, when the harvest-work
Was done, to give his heart and plead for her's.
So Rodney bade farewell and went his way.

Yet still his plea the younger brother pled ;
● And when the harvest-sheaves were gather'd in,
And all the implements of toil laid by,
And Woodleigh rang with shouts of mirth,
He drew her from among the merry guests,
And lured her on, with soft and honey'd speech,
Across the slope, and thro' the moonlit wood,
And halted on the summit of the cliff
Which overhung the lake, and sued again
With all the fervor of his ardent tongue,
And laughing, vowed if she his passion spurn'd,
To cast himself into the lake below.
And from the distant vale the harvest-glee
Was faintly borne—a joyous melody.

GLEE OF HARVEST-SINGERS.

"THE summer sun is down the west;
• The barley, wheat, and clover
Are gathered in. From toil we rest—
The harvest-days are over.

"The moon is up, the stars are out,
The dew is slowly falling;
O'er hill and dale, with merry shout,
Our joyful hearts are calling.

"While lovers wander—youth and maid—
Away alone together,
To seek the sweet secluded shade
Of mountain-vine, or heather,

"We wander on from home to home,
Both cot and mansion greeting,
The mountain-echo, as we roam,
Our Harvest-song repeating."

Now Robert saw the twain desert the Hall,
And through his breast shot pangs of jealous rage;
He follow'd, hidden by the veil of night,
And crouch'd behind a tree upon the cliff;
But when that foolish vow was said, he rose,
And stood a spectre in the clear moonlight.
One glance of jealous hate he cast, then spoke.
"Poor fool!" "A listener!" the other said—
"You've leave to call me so, you baby-fool!"

Then heated words led on to bitter oaths,
Till Maurice, roused, in angry passion said,
"T were better far to be the fool you think
Than that you here have proved yourself—a spy!"
The elder brother closed his hand in rage,
And struck it madly in the other's face,
And dash'd him headlong down the precipice!
One shriek of mingl'd fright and baffl'd rage
Ascended from the water's ruff'd breast,
And then the startl'd waves resum'd their calm,
And circling ripples widen'd into naught,
Unheedful of the struggling life beneath.

Ah! then the brother would a world have giv'n
Could he recall that rash and dreadful deed!
His anger quickly chang'd to wildest grief.
He loath'd the fainting maiden at his feet,
And imprecations heap'd on her—the cause.
The moon conceal'd her face behind a cloud,
And, to his ear, the zephyrs seem'd a shriek;
And with a fearful word upon his lips,
One frighten'd glance he cast behind, and fled!

Across the lake the Convent bells rang out
A requiem upon the silent air,
And far away the Harvest-Singers' glee
Was faintly heard—a mournful melody.





PART II.

IN CAMP.

A THREAT'NING cloud had gather'd in the sky,
The gloom of war was hanging o'er the land;
The deepest woe a nation's heart could feel—
Its life-blood threaten'd by its children's hands—
Had fall'n like early frost among the flow'rs.
A nation stood array'd against itself,
And treason's banner flaunted to the breeze.
The cannon's throat grew hoarse with shouts of
death,
And deadly instruments of war loud clash'd,
And shrieks, and groans, and curses rent the air,
And warriors slain were piled in hecatombs,

And thick, black clouds of smoke arose and hung
Between the Earth and Heav'n, to keep the stench
Of war from Heaven's nostrils.

Night had come.

The battle had been fought and dearly won,
And all was silent in the G'rilla camp,
Save, now and then, the stamp or neigh of steed,
Or groan of battle-stricken warrior.
To smould'ring embers had the watch-fires burnt,
When from the distant hill a bugle-call
Arous'd the sentry from his drowsy muse;
And "Who goes there?" was borne upon the
breeze,
And answer'd back, "A friend. A prisoner
We bring unto the chief—a spy, we think."
A guard was summon'd, and the prisoner
In close confinement plac'd until the morn.

The sun began to streak the eastern sky
In gold and red, and birds their matins sung
As cheerily as though no curse of war
Had ever swept a nation to its death.

The morning drum and bugle woke the troops,
And call'd them from their tents.

The Captain rose
And summon'd all his chiefest warriors,
And form'd a council, and advisement took
Concerning him who, at the midnight hour,
Was brought a captive bound into the camp.

Then those were call'd who had surpris'd the
man,

Who made averment 'gainst him for a spy,
Relating how they found him near the camp,
Who, when surpris'd, had sought to make away;
And how, when apprehended, he had fought
So mightily, they were constrain'd to bind
His arms, lest he should take the life of one;
And how upon his person they had found
A paper, which they, being men unlearn'd,
Could not divine. The paper being shown,
A passport from the Northern Army prov'd.

The witnesses dismiss'd, the Council held
A consultation, and declar'd the spy,
By rigid rule of war, should die.

The prisoner was brought to hear his doom ;
And when before his arbiters he stood,
And saw for him no glance of sympathy,
And knew that death would be his certain fate,
He trembl'd not, but stood ereet and proud ;
And no defence he made, nor pled for life.
Then said the chieftain, "Have you naught to say?
You have been judg'd a spy, and know your
doom.

Yet, join our band, and life to you is spar'd."
A glance of scorn he threw at him who spoke,
And said: "I have been judg'd a spy? By
whom?

Not by my peers, for they are loyal men,
And such, beside myself, I see not here.
If warring 'gainst my country's enemies,
And battling for the honor'd Stars and Stripes—
The proudest flag that floats upon the breeze—
Deserves the shameful death you've mark'd for me,

Then be it so. And yet I am no spy;
Chance threw me in your way. But no; I scorn
To ask one hour of life from such as you!
And though you hold my life at beck or nod,
I tell you I am proud to be your foe!
And if you tore my heart from out my breast,
I would defy you; for what patriot
Deems not his country's glory more than life?"

A silence fell upon the councillors—
'Twas but the stillness that precedes the storm—
And then a show'r of execrations fell,
And loudly did they clamor for his death.
The chief alone remain'd unmov'd and calm.
"You're bold," he said. "If you are, then, no
spy,
Pray tell us quickly who and what you are?"
His only answer was a look of scorn.
"If still you spurn our counsel to redeem
Your forfeit life, we fain would know your
name."

But sullen, proud, defiant still he stood.
The chieftain then, with angry gesture, said:

"Your name, I fear, is not an honor'd one,
Else would you never shame to speak it here."
"Asham'd to speak my name! 'Tis Rodney
Gray!"

At mention of that name the chieftain reel'd,
A deadly pallor spread upon his face,
And, feigning pain, he broke the council up,
With order that the captive be confin'd,
And guarded 'gainst a more convenient hour.

For hours the night had blotted out the sun.
Again the camp was wrapt in deepest gloom—
Such gloom as comes before the coming moon,
Who, still an hour undue, the stars essay'd
To light the world until her presence paled
Their feeble gleam. The owl woke in the dell—
The only sound that stirr'd the slumb'ring air.
The night was chill, and as the sentry paced,
With measur'd, noiseless tread, he drew his cloak
In closer folds about his form, and humm'd,
In voice scarce audible, a song of home:

THE SENTRY'S SONG.

"SLEEP, soldier, sleep! and dream of home!

Leave battle-thoughts for waking;
And in thy slumber lightly roam
Where waves are gently breaking
Against a flower-teeming land,
Where orange-trees are blooming,
And satin-leav'd magnolias stand,
The Southern air perfuming.

"Sleep, soldier, sleep! and dream of love,—

No danger shall betide thee,—
And, dreaming, wander in a grove,
Thy heart's dear choice beside thee.
Or, dream the dawn of blessed peace,
For which all hearts are yearning;
In slumber see the battle cease,
And dream the home-returning."

The sentry paus'd. A sound of footsteps fell
Upon his wakeful ear. His challenge-word

Was quickly answer'd by his chieftain's voice.
"I've come to see the captive spy," he said;
"Unbar the door—and haste—the night is cold;
And when I've pass'd, walk yonder—keep aloof—
And on your peril come you not within
My voice's easy range, save when I call."
The soldier bow'd, and turn'd the rusty lock,
And went his way.

Within a dreary hut,
But dimly lighted by a single torch,
Upon a bed of straw, lay Rodney Gray,
With limbs so firmly bound the flesh was cold;
And in his troubl'd dream he heard his name,
And waking, saw a figure by his side,
And thought it but the phantom of his dream.
"Wake, Rodney Gray! I've come to set you free!"
The figure stoop'd and cut the thongs apart,
And when the hot blood fill'd the deaden'd limbs,
The captive rose, and said: "Who are you, friend?
Why come to loose my limbs, and bid me hope?
I was resign'd, and not afeard to die.
But now that life springs in my heart anew,
I fear I could not die as soldiers should!"

"Fear not; I have the pow'r to make you free,
And so you shall be. Yet before you go,
One word I crave—some tidings of my home.
If mem'ry clings to you as't does to me,
You will remember in your youth a friend—
The sharer of your sorrows and your sports—
One Robert Leeson, heir of Woodleigh Farm?"
"I do remember such," the captive said.

"Have near ten years of sorrow made a change
So great, you fail to know me, Rodney Gray?"
Not so! He knew him then, and grasp'd his hand,
And held it long. And Robert Leeson wept—
The first tears shed by him for ten long years.

But naught of Robert's home the captive knew.
He, too, had been a rover all these years;
But this he knew—what Robert also knew—
That in the Northern army Robert's sire
A foremost leader was. And that was all.

"Now hasten, Rodney Gray! The moon is up,
And dawn must see you safe beyond these hills;
If here you loiter death must be your doom."

"Dear Robert, leave this life, and come with me.
Come, battle for the dear old Flag. Come home!"

"Come home! Nay, Rodney; would to God I
could!

These hands are crimson with a brother's blood,
And never more that home will welcome me!"

"Nay, Robert, friend; this night will half atone
That deed; for have you not a brother's love
Shown me?—And in the Calendar of Heav'n
A brother's love stands next to love of God."

The moon was rising o'er the eastern hills,
And silvering the tips of higher trees,
Who cast a shade of gloom across the vale—
Made denser by the vapor-cloud that rose
Above the ground. A pathway thro' the mist
The fugitive enforc'd; and when the sun
Arose to chase the mists away, he stood,
A soldier free, within the Union camp.





PART III.

THE RETURN.

THE war was ended, and the sun of Peace
Shone brightly over fair Virginia's hills.
At Woodleigh Farm the harvest had been reap'd,
And all the winter-fruit was gather'd in.
The storehouse groan'd with overflow of corn;
For not in many years the farm had grown
So rich a harvest. Leeson was return'd,
A hero, brown'd by war and battle-scarr'd;
Had doff'd his war-apparel, and the plain
Habiliments of peace resum'd; and all
Was as it had been, save the aching void
In Amy's breast, which never could be fill'd
While Robert came not.

Ten long years had wrought
A change in Amy scarce perceptible ;
Yet riper seem'd her beauty. There are those
Who seem as bless'd with youth perennial,
And she was one of these. As long ago
She loved to roam the fields and climb the hills,
And tell her heart in song, so roam'd she now ;
But sadder now her heart, and sad her song.

LA PENSIEROSA.

(Sadness.)

“THE distant wood is smoky blue,
The hills look through a mystic haze,
The valley turns a purple hue,
And mourns the fading summer-days.
The leaves are whirling from the trees
Into the hollows of the hills,
The wail of Autumn fills the breeze
And mingles with complaining rills.

“The cold November rain descends
Upon the meadows, bare and brown;
The bee his way to shelter wends,
For all the flow'rs are stricken down.
The birds to southern climes have flown,
The ghostly trees send forth a wail;
And gentle summer-winds have grown
As chilling as a hand of mail.

“My heart is like the Autumn-time;
For memory recalls the past,
When youth and hope were in their prime,
And love made youthful blood run fast.
My heart bewails its summer-day,
Although my lips refuse to tell
Of one so loved, now far away—
Too far to hear love's dying knell.”

As lovers, parting, part reluctantly,
So round the neck of Winter, Summer hung,
And supplicated longer lease of life.
But Winter, as a lover wrong'd in love,

Grim satisfaction feels in pow'r to scorn,
With freezing breath her clinging fingers numb'd,
And swept her from him with an icy blast.
Old Boreas unlock'd his frosty chain,
And calling 'round him all the whistling winds,
Dash'd on, and blotted out the golden hues
Which Nature's dreamy artist painted there.

'Twas Christmas-eve. As night came slowly on,
A snowy carpet gather'd o'er the fields,
And feath'ry flakes were chas'd by fitful winds
In whirling eddies through the leafless trees.
Before a crackling blaze of hick'ry logs,
His head bent, musingly, upon his breast,
Judge Leeson sat. And ever and anon,
A long-pent sigh stole upward from his heart,
And 'scap'd half audibly between his lips.
And Amy, as she could her presence spare—
For she prepar'd the evening meal—would bend,
And loving, press her lips upon his cheek,
And smooth the silver'd hair from off his brow.
The agèd man would bless her for her love,
And sink again into his former mood.

Upon another form the firelight glow'd—
'Twas one, whose fitful starts, and vacant eyes,
And strange behavior, told of Reason's flight;
And often as the aged man would look
Upon the harmless madman's pensive face,
He sadly shook his head and silent wept.
And Amy watch'd the motion of his eyes,
And knew his grief; and, mov'd to bitter tears,
Knelt by his knee, and took his hand, and said:
"Dear Uncle, I well know your thoughts to-night—
While other happy fathers have their sons,
You mourn your loss!"

"Nay, darling, do not weep;
'Twas not your fault," he said.

"It was my fault—
Oh! that I had been exil'd in his stead!"
The farmer-soldier drew her to his breast,
And brush'd her golden hair, and sooth'd her grief;
And when her sobs were hush'd a stillness reign'd,
Unbroken save by moaning winds without,
The crackling blaze within, and swaying vines
Against the casement ticking drearily.

Far down the valley, battling with the storm,
A lonely trav'ler made his weary way
Toward the well-known beacon-light, which starr'd
The sloping hillside near a mile away.
"Home!" trembl'd on the Exile's lips; "Dear
home!

Once more I near thee after ten long years
Of weary wandering. Dare I go on?
One glance may bring more anguish than these
years

Of doubt. Unoccupied may be the chairs;
Strange faces may surround the hearthstone now.
Ah, no; I must go on—suspense is death!"
The storm grew fiercer, and the blinding snow
Dash'd in his face, as though to drive him back.
Still, on he struggl'd, up the hill, where grew
The hazel-copses; and where oft, a boy,
He'd play'd among the green, low-growing pines.
But when he near'd the well-remember'd cliff,
A shudder shook his frame. "Oh, God!" he
groan'd,

"Would I'd been dash'd down yonder cliff instead!
Poor Maurice! Oh! it seems the long, long years

Of anguish and remorse I have endur'd
Might now atone for that one heedless act!"
A voice seem'd whisp'ring on the winter-wind:
"Though scarlet be your sins, they shall be made
White as the snow!"

"Oh! would it might be so!
But such a crime! My God! Cain bore his
mark—
The cursèd stain of murder—to the grave!
This weight is hard to bear.— God give me
strength!"
And so he plodded on.

The Hall loom'd up
From out the darkness as he nearer drew.
How like of old it seem'd! There was the same
Familiar window, with its climbing vines;
The same soft light, that gleam'd out like a star,
Through white-fring'd curtains, loop'd in festoons
back,
Above the odorous geraniums;
The same tall pines, now whistling in the wind;

The same long porch, all white with drifts of
snow;—

And he alone was chang'd!

A single look,
And forth again in exile he must go!
One moment there he stood irresolute,
Then from the window drew the deaden'd vines.
Yes, there his father, silver-hair'd and bow'd,
But living still; and Amy at his knee,
Grown lovelier with lapse of years; and love
Rose up, with ten-fold power, in his breast,
While gazing on that face whose beauty had,
Long years ago, allur'd him to the deed
That made his after-life an agony.

“But, God of mercy! Look! What form is
that?

It cannot be!—My brother!—Do I dream?
Dear God! If this is madness, let me die!”
He tore the vines away, and look'd again—
He shriek'd aloud, and thunder'd at the door,
And soon was clasp'd upon his father's breast;
And Amy, wild with joy, held both his hands
And wept.

But Maurice took no heed of all.
"Dear Maurice, give me welcome," Robert said;
"Forgive the past, or else my heart will break!"
Then, when he knew that Reason long had flown,
He took his brother's hand, and call'd his name.
The madman started, raised his eyes and stared,
And held his head in list'ning attitude;
And when the brother spoke again his name,
A gleam of sanity shot o'er his face,
A mighty weight was lifted from his brain,—
His mind was clear—he rose, and knew them all.

The agèd man then call'd his elder son,
And beckon'd Amy Winthrope to his side,
And plac'd their hands together, palm to palm.
"Be not afraid to take her hand, my boy;
She loved you best, and waited all these years."

The storm against the casement flung the sleet,
The wind shriek'd dismally among the pines;
But winter-storm could not disturb the joy,
Nor mar the peaceful dreams that Christmas-eve—
The happiest ever known at Woodleigh Farm.

So, Robert's years of penance now were o'er,
And Amy's love made life a dream of joy.
But Rodney Gray had fallen in the war;
And Robert brought him to his native home,
And rear'd above his head a costly stone,
And planted weeping-willows at his feet.



UNDER THE SNOW.



UNDER THE SNOW.

I.

DARK was the night, and the rain fell fast—
Swept down from the yielding cloud;
And the storm came on with a warning blast,
And the winds grew fierce and loud;
And the snow-banks melted and leaped in rills,
Over the rocks to the foot of the hills,
There met in a shower of spray,
And merrily rippled away.

II.

The great pine fell from its towering pride,
Struck down by the furious blast;
But the lone Red Inn by the mountain-side,
Unseen by the storm, was passed.

And the men sat round in the bright, warm glow,
With never a thought of the rain or' snow,
 And the jest and the mirth rose high,
 As the bottle and glass went by.

III.

The red flame roared in the broad fire-place,
 With a cheerful and comforting glow,
And the warm light danced on the clean-swept
 face
 Of the solid brick hearth below.
And a fragrance arose from the black coffee-pot,
Which steamed on the hearth over coals red-hot;
 And the wine-bottles, grouped in the stalls,
 Quaint shadows threw on the gray walls.

IV.

The stout oaken door, on its hinges of wood,
 Swung back with a clattering sound,
And on the dark threshold a strange man stood,
 Half-timidly gazing around.

And the wind swept in at the half-ope'd door,
 And showered the rain-drops over the floor;
 And the wine-bottles clink'd and jarr'd,
 Ere the door was secured and barr'd.

V.

The stranger was feeble, and old, and lean,
 And his coat was faded and worn;
 His jacket and trowsers and shoes were mean,
 And his hat was dingy and torn.
 And the rain dripp'd down from his coat to the
 floor,
 As, timid and shivering, he stood by the door,
 And, bending his uncovered head,
 In a faltering tone he said:

VI.

"Good-evening, sirs. Do I intrude?
 I'd like to warm me, if I might.
 I may? I thank you. True for you,
 It is indeed a stormy night;

And I have braved the storm since dawn.

What?—weary? Yes, I'm sorely worn;
Indeed, I've traveled far to-day—

Near thirty miles I've walked since morn.

VII.

"You need not laugh, young man! I know

My clothes are worn with age and mould.

But let me tell you, gentlemen,

It's grief, not age, that makes me old!

My life has been a sad one, sirs.

I was not born like this to roam,

Begging for bread from door to door—

I once, like you, had friends and home.

VIII.

"You'd like to hear my story? No!

'Twould make me sad—I'm sure it would.

And yet, you've got me talking now,

The tale may yield—God knows—some good.

Take something warm? No, no! Not I!

You'll know the reason why, my friend,

Before one half my story's told.

I thank you—hope I don't offend.

IX.

"I'll warm before the fire, sir—

The winter warmth which God has sent.

What, sir? Oh, yes; He gave the wine;

But for our wholesome use 'twas meant.

Don't think I'm lecturing, my friends;

Oh, no; I'm but a worthless man—

Sir, if I might a favor ask:

A draught from yonder coffee-can.

X.

"I thank you. That's refreshing, sir!

I've known such friendliness as this

But seldom late years. Ah! the past

Has been more misery than bliss.

Yet, I a dear home once possess'd—

A cottage 'neath a sloping hill,

Where just before the garden-gate

A foot-plank crossed a rippling rill.

XI.

"A chestnut tree, with swinging boughs,

Grew just beyond the little cot,

And from its roots a shell-path ran
Between two beds of 'Touch-me-not';
And creeping vines grew on the roof,
And trailed along the portico;
And honeysuckles climbed the door,
And rose-trees swept the stoop below.

XII.

"A deep brook turned a drooning mill—
A tall red mill with gabled front—
Half hid by willow-trees, who stood
Protection from the Storm-king's brunt.
The granite wheels that crushed the grain
With lightning whirl and constant moan,
The huge revolving circle, sped
By water's weight, were all my own.

XIII.

"I had a wife, too; and a child—
A dainty creature, six years old,
With pretty little hands and feet,"
And hair that hung in waves of gold.

I was a favored man, my friends;
 Hope made the future fair and bright;
 I loved my wife, my child, my mill—
 No prince could boast a heart more light.

XIV.

“And when the long day’s toil was done,
 With sunny smiles upon her brow,
 My wife would greet me at the gate—
 God bless her! She’s an angel now!
 And Bessie—yes, sir; that’s the child—
 Would climb into my arms and lay
 Her golden head upon my breast,
 Just like a wearied little Fay.

XV.

“And in the dusk of summer-eve
 I’d sit beneath the chestnut-tree,
 With wife and Bessie by my side—
 I’m choking with the memory!
 Oh! happy, blissful days of yore!
 Could I but live them o’er again,
 How different my after-life
 Would be. Alas, regret is vain!

XVI.

"I took to drinking after that.

I need not tell how I became
A drunkard, and the jest and scorn
Of those who once revered my name.
Across the valley stood the inn,
Under the beech-trees, on the hill;
And there I'd go day after day,
Neglecting wife, child, home, and mill.

XVII.

"It wasn't long till poverty
Came, like a thief, unto our door,
And stole our comforts one by one;
And yet, for all, I sinned the more.
And Mary's cheek grew pale and thin,
The blood seemed going drop by drop;
The sunny smiles all faded, too.
I saw that, but I could not stop.

XVIII.

"God knows I tried to break it off.
But when the thirst was on my soul,

I would have bartered hope of Heav'n
 For one draught from the poisoned bowl!
 Oh! how it stung my fallen pride
 When former friends jeered at my name,
 Or passed me with a glance of scorn—
 I had to drink to drown the shame!

XIX.

"And thus the Summer passed away;
 And when the chill north-wind foretold
 The Winter's near approach, the mill,
 Long silent from neglect, was sold.
 Our little homestead followed soon,
 To cancel debts long overdue,
 And in a log hut down the vale
 We thought to live the Winter through.

XX.

"The stormy weather came at last.
 The bleak winds of December shriek'd
 Among the leafless maple-boughs,
 And beam, and roof, and rafter creak'd.

But desolation reigned within,
More terrible than Winter's pall;
For crime-begotten poverty,
With demon scowl, hung over all.

XXI.

"And yet from patient Mary's lips
Ne'er fell reproach or bitter word.
My oft-made pledges of reform
She joyfully, yet doubting, heard.
Ah! vain were pledges! Drink was still
My bane of life. Within its snare
It held me, till I loathed myself,
And slowly yielded to despair.

XXII.

"One bitter evening Bessie came
To urge me home, as oft before
She'd done. With oaths and cruel words,
I drove her from the tavern-door.
My God! The look of sad reproach
She gave me, I shall ne'er forget!
Though many years have passed, that look
Of yearning anguish haunts me yet.

XXIII.

“Again I see her dainty form
Close wrapp’d in shawl of faded red;
A little, fur-trimmed, woolen hood,
Scarce covering her golden head.
Out in the cold she, weeping, went,
With slow and hesitating tread;
My gaze went after, till the gloom
Hid dainty form and golden head.

XXIV.

“The night shut in. A dusky haze
Had gathered over hill and dale;
And, whirled before the northern wind,
The snow-flakes drifted down the vale.
Faster, and faster still, they fell,
Until the air was thick as night,
And hill, and dale, and wood, and field,
Were mantled with a veil of white.

XXV.

“All night the roaring storm swept on;
All night came down the drifting show’rs;

And, deeming wife and child safe hous'd,
In drunken glee I passed the hours.
At break of day no change had come—
The snow still drifted from the north;
And scarce until the hour of noon
Could one, with safety, venture forth.

XXVI.

“With conscience sore, and aching limbs,
I homeward toiled through drifts of snow,
Which, wind-swept from the hills above,
Had heaped in waves the vale below.
And far across the dreary waste
A single smoke-wreath, blue and thin,
Slow curling o'er my cheerless home,
Alone gave note of life within.

XXVII.

“Yes, drear without; but Oh, within!
Too soon I learned the dreadful cost
Of that dark night of revelry—
My child—God's mercy! She was lost!

One glance from Mary told the tale
Ere I had passed the creaking door :
'My child! Our Bessie! Not with you?
She shrieked, and swooned upon the floor.

XXVIII.

"A thunderbolt could not have struck
Such icy terror through my frame!
The winter-winds shrieked 'Murderer!'
And coupled with it Bessie's name.
The air seemed filled with howling fiends,
And cold drops started from my brow—
Some water, there! I'm smothering!
I thank you—there—I'm better now.

XXIX.

"I need not tell you of the weeks
Of fruitless search through waste and wild,
Hoping, yet dreading, each new drift
I overturned enshrined my child;
Nor how my wife—poor stricken dove!—
When time confirmed our Bessie's doom,
From frantic grief and wild despair,
Fell into apathetic gloom.

XXX.

"Day after day she idly sat
With folded hands and drooping form,
While deep-drawn sighs and quiv'ring lips
Betrayed the smothered inward storm.
And when the Winter's reign was o'er,
And snowdrifts changed to leaping rills,
Half-crazed, the livelong day she'd search
The vales and nooks among the hills.

XXXI.

"One April eve, returning not,
All night I searched, and madly call'd
Her name. The morning sun reveal'd
A sight I started from appall'd!
A lifeless form upon the ground,
Some scattered, mould'ring bones beside
A tattered shawl and fur-trimm'd hood,
Told where my wife and child had died!

XXXII.

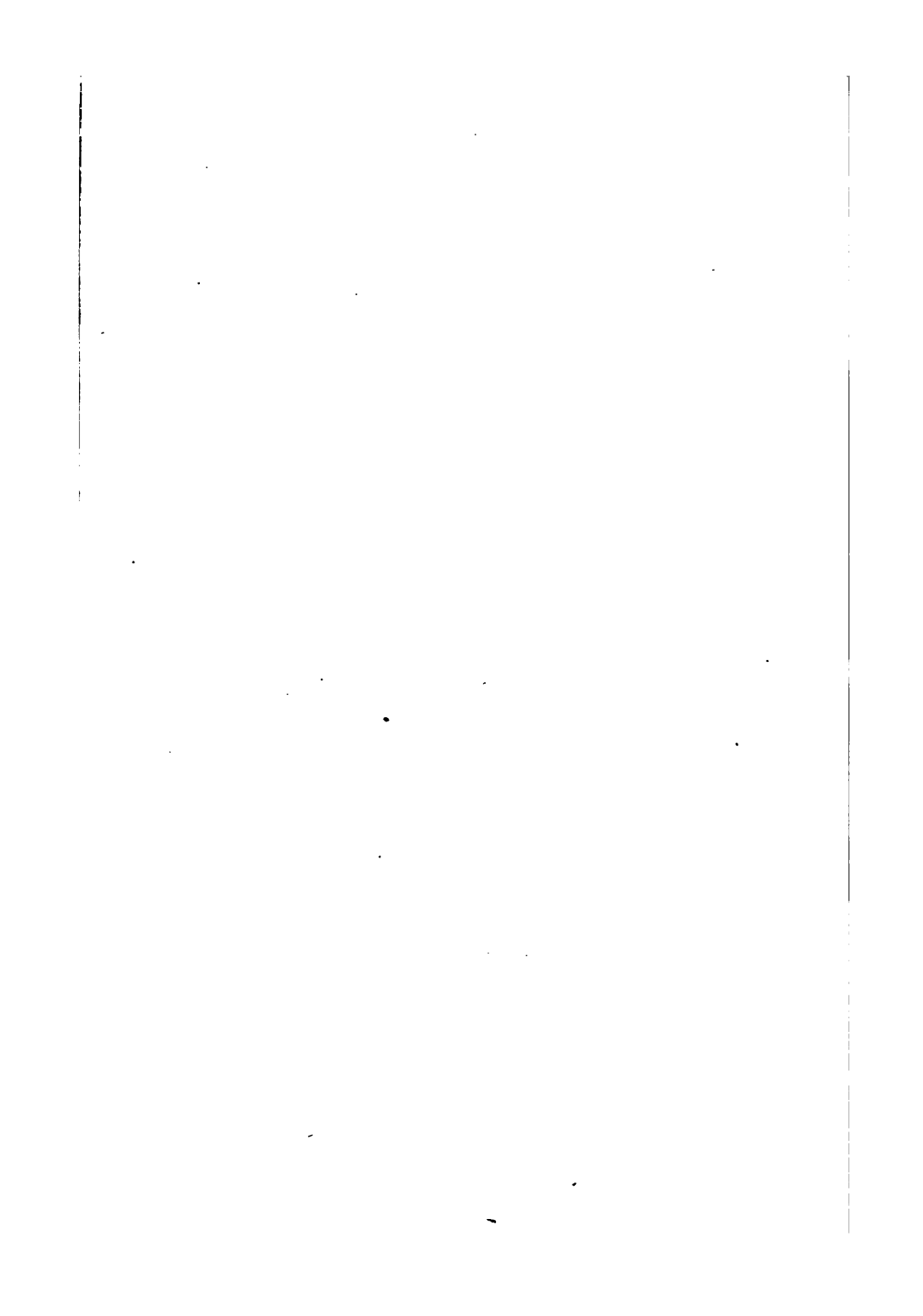
"Down in the valley, by the brook,
They both rest in a single grave;

A rose-tree blossoms either side,
And overhead the willows wave.
The brooklet ripples at their feet
A requiem so sad and sweet,
That zephyrs halt to catch the strain,
And murmur it along the plain.

XXXIII.

"And now they call me mad! Ah, no!
I'm but an autumn-leaf, storm-driv'n —
A pilgrim, waiting God's own time
To join my wife and child in Heav'n.
For if long years of penance can
Blot out the sins of early years,
God knows I have atoned for mine,
In blinding and repentant tears!"





POEMS OF MEMORY.

TO

MY DEAR SISTERS,

BESS and EMILY,

THESE POEMS OF MEMORY

ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.



POEMS OF MEMORY.

THE OLD BIBLE.

Two brazen clasps across the front,
The hinges red with rust;
The back all scarred and marred with age,
And covered o'er with dust.

The corners dog-eared, soiled and worn,
And all the leaves displaced;
And here and there are penciled lines,
By father's dear hand traced.

Upon the walnut-stand it lies
From morn till evening late;
And though it seems like others, yet
I've never seen its mate.

The window faces to the West,
Where I have often stood,
Leaning upon that dear old book,
And gazing t'ward the wood.

And just beyond, a maple-tree,
With leaves of em'rald hue,
Flecks o'er the window-sill with shade,
And veils the sun from view.

The garden-path looks just the same
It did long years ago,
When I, a child, unknown to care,
Did ramble there alone.

The wooden posts, with balls atop,
Where hangs the garden-gate,
Are worm-eaten and worn with age,
And bending 'neath their weight.

The gate is creaky, and the latch
Is rusted o'er by time;
And up the fast-decaying pales
Sweet honeysuckles climb.

The orchard, too, though old, remains,—
The blossoms, pink and white,
Are just the same they used to be,
The colors just as bright.

And when the rich October month
Puts on its Autumn suit,
The trees are loaded just the same,
With green and golden fruit.

And yet the orchard, garden-gate,
The spring, the running brook,
Can never such remembrance bring
As that old, time-worn book.

The brightest garlands of my youth,
Which memory now weaves,
Were moments spent by mother's knee,
Turning for her the leaves.





A REMEMBRANCE.

A BANK of rugged, fleecy clouds
Piled up against the azure sky,
And brilliant lines of gold and red
Along their changeful edges lie.
The waning orb of day doth pause
To tip the trees of em'rald green
With brighter hues, then sinks to rest
Behind the glowing western screen.

Above an ivy-covered roof,
A tow'ring, haughty willow bends,
And from the rustic chimney-top
A wreath of curling smoke ascends;
And there, beneath the glancing light,
It turns to amethystine hue,
And then dissolves to gossamer,
And melts into the distant blue.

A group of laughing children stand
To watch the flick'ring daylight fade ;
The plough-boy whistles merrily
While plodding homeward thro' the glade.
A motley herd of cattle stoop
To drink from out the running rill,
And, having quenched their fevered thirst,
They wander, lowing, up the hill.

* * * * *

A Summer-scene!—a common view!
Yet one most pleasing to the gaze:—
'Tis sweet remembrances like these
That soothe and cheer our dying days.





LITTLE BEN.

“MOTHER, darling, don’t you think
I’m well and strong enough to rise,
And sit outside the cottage-door,
Beneath the clear blue Autumn skies?

“This little room is close and dark,
For scarce a single ray of light
Can force its way through yonder blind—
It seems like one perpetual night.

“When Georgie held the door ajar
Just now, beyond the orchard-wall
I saw the ladders ’gainst the trees,
And heard the ripened apples fall.

"I know I won't be strong enough
To help bring in the fruit this year;
But, oh! I'd love to sit and watch
The men and boys at work and hear

"The apples tumbling to the ground—
Some gold and green, some striped with red;
And some almost as large and round
As baby Georgie's golden head.

"Oh! mother, dear, do let me go!
I'm sure 'twould ease this aching pain
Which throbs about my temples so."
And Benny pleaded not in vain.

The Windsor-chair was carried out
And placed beneath a cooling shade;
And 'mong the pillows, snowy white,
The little invalid was laid.

The laborers a moment paused
To kindly greet the master's son;
For Benny's gentle spirit had,
In former days, their friendship won.

The blue-bird warbled overhead
A song of joy and gratitude;
And long did little Ben recline
In blissful, dreamy lassitude.

But nature wearied out at last;
And slumber banished smile or frown—
The angel Peace came flitting past,
And pressed the drooping lashes down.

The sun peeped through the swinging boughs,
To kiss the waving flaxen hair;
And Autumn zephyrs gently whirled
The leaves about the Windsor-chair.





GOLD-BROWN HAIR.

THE monarch of light rose up in the East,
And crimsoned the face of the morn,
And sent forth a shower of sunlight to feast
On the acres of barley and corn.
And the wild-rose lifted its arrogant crest,
And shook the bright dew from its redolent
breast;

And the birds sang sweet and low,
As they flitted hither and fro.

A sweet little maiden tripp'd over the dew,
She was bright as a morning in May;
And her beautiful eyes were as dreamy and blue
As the haze of an October day.
And her lips were as ripe and as ruby as wine,
And her motion was light as a swaying vine,
And her gold-brown hair so bright
Reflected the ripples of light.

A melody floated up into the air,
As sweet as the trill of a bird.
I called to this maid with the gold-brown hair,
But she answered me never a word.
Yet the sly, winning glance of her beautiful eye
Still lives in my heart, though years have gone
by;
And I wonder are angels so fair
As this maid with the gold-brown hair?





WOODBINE.

How oft I sit and idly gaze
Upon the distant silver haze,
And dream again the golden days
Of long ago.

I see again the ivy-vine
Around the pillar'd porch entwine;
The apple-trees spread out in line,
All pink and snow.

I seem again, in youth, to roam
Where breeze-caressing willows moan
Around my darling boyhood home—
Revered Woodbine!
And fondly do my thoughts go back
To watch the white-wing'd sloop and smack
Flit o'er the river's silver track,
In Summer-time.

Again I see the waving wheat
Turn brown beneath the Summer-heat,
And hear the tread of coming feet
 In harvest-time.

And as I roam among the trees,
The reapers' voices on the breeze
Seem like the murmur of the bees
 Around Woodbine.

I often think of sister Bess,
And how she'd chide my naughtiness;
And yet I loved her none the less,
 Or ever will.
How oft we crept along the ledge,
To gather berries from the hedge,
And scatter them along the edge
 Of Elton Rill.

And often has the welkin rung
With songs that Bess and I have sung,
In those bright days when we were young,
 And laughed at fears.

Ah! then the joys of earth were rife,
For we were in the morn of life,
And dreamed not of the toil and strife
Of after-years.

Again the earth is green and fair,
And perfumes, on the evening air,
Come drifting through my window, where
I now recline,
Dreaming again the days of yore—
The golden time long since—before
I was a wand'rer from the door
Of sweet Woodbine!



I'VE SOMETHING TO TELL.

COME out in the beautiful sunshine,
Come out in the golden glow;
Oh! come while the morning zephyrs
Are whispering soft and low.
Come, roam with me over the meadow,
Where the grass is so soft and green—
I have something so sweet to tell you,
My beautiful, beautiful queen!

Come out where the barley is waving,
And quivering under the breeze,
And the tassels are dancing so lightly
To the hum of the murmuring bees.
Come out to the shadowy woodland,
Where the trees are all emerald green;
For I've something so sweet to tell you,
My beautiful, beautiful queen!

I know of a greenwood bower,
Far out in the woodland wild;
'Tis hidden away from all the world,
Save the birds and the zephyrs mild.
Below is a velvety carpet,
Above is an emerald screen;
Do come, for I've something to tell you,
My beautiful, beautiful queen!

You are bright as a flower this morning,
With your ribbons of scarlet and snow;—
I knew you would come, my darling;
My heart had foretold me so.
You wish me to tell you my secret?
Oh! can you not guess what I mean?
Then, I'll tell you, my darling: *I love you!*
My beautiful, beautiful queen!





A REMINISCENCE OF YOUTH.

THE balmiest days of the year had come,
When nature—her Summer-work done—
Sat peacefully back in her Autumnal chair,
And smilingly talked with the sun.
The leaves were beginning to brown beneath
The mellowy-golden blaze;
And the far-off hills like phantoms appear'd
'Neath mantles of silvery haze.

The hedges were dropping their leafy screens,
And the branches were growing bare;
And the blue-bells, shaken by Autumn winds,
A requiem rang in the air.
Away thro' the meadow, and over the moor,
Away to the wild woodland,
Thro' stubble, and brier, and brake we roam'd
Together, with basket in hand.

With hearts as light as the white thistle-downs
That floated on every breeze,
We clambered the high rail-fence by the wood,
And climbed up the hickory-trees.
And laughing and shouting, as only boys can,
At the glorious prize we had found,
We shook from the branches the ripe-brown nuts,
And showered them down to the ground.

But that has been years; ah! long years ago;
And we the bright dream shall never more
know—

Never again!

For Robin has flown to the Kingdom of God—
His body is lying beneath the green sod
In the little churchyard, where the willow-trees
nod
To Robin Tremaine!





THE SOUTHERN MAID'S LAMENT.

UNDER the odorous orange-tree
Sadly and lonely I mourn for thee!
Ah! where do you linger, away from me?
My poor heart is well-nigh breaking!
You promised to come when the rich perfume,
Which hides in the bell of the orange-bloom,
Was filtered below over Winter's tomb
By the south wind's gentle shaking.

My heart is untuned to the blithesome glees
Which come from the moors, where the cypress-
trees
Are waving their branches aloft in the breeze,
With moss-curtains swinging beneath.

The Spring, and the Summer, and Winter have
passed,—

Another lone Summer is coming on fast,—

Ah! I fear that my love-dream is over at last,

And peace will come only in death!

Sadly I wept when you bade me good-bye;

You chided me, saying, the time would soon fly,

And that you would surely return by-and-by;

And then we should never be parted.

You vowed to be faithful! and now 'tis a year

Since you promised to come, and you are not
here.

You have taken a bride of the North, I fear,

And left me to die broken-hearted!





DREAMING.

WHEN Morning hangs the lamp of day
Against the arch of blue,
And em'rald meads are dotted o'er
With beads of diamond dew,
And zephyrs, like the thoughts of love,
Roam unrestrained and free
Across the sunlit, gold-green hills,
'Tis then I dream of thee.

And when the arid Noon has come,
With quiet, golden glow,
And naught is heard through all the glen
Except the gentle flow
Of brooks, my spirit roams with thee
Through wild woodland and glade—
Through ever-changing floods of light
And moving veils of shade.

When Evening draws her dusky veil
 Athwart the light of day,
And on the peaceful brow of night
 The south winds fondly play;
And twilight's soft and mystic hues
 Fall lightly, greeting me
With song of birds, and breath of flowers,
 Ah! then I dream of thee.

From early morn till morn again
 I dream, sweet one, of thee;
What happiness 'twould be to know
 That thou dost think of me!





AN AUTUMN STORM.

ALL day there came from the southern clime
A breeze like the breath of Spring;
And the mullein decked his waving plume,
And bowed like a living thing.
And a misty haze of purple swept
Over the valley, and slowly crept—
A mystic, filmy screen—
Along the wild ravine.

The god of day, in a blaze of light,
Had slowly sunk to rest,
When suddenly veered the changeful winds,
And shifted 'round to the west;
But first a stillness, like the dead,
Over the face of the earth was spread;
And sultry grew the air,
Like August burning there.

Then slowly a mass of inky clouds
Rolled up in the western sky,
And, like a terrible banner of death,
Came on with a moaning sigh.
Nearer it came, and the lightning's flash
Was followed quick by the thunder's crash.
And the angry winds, let free,
Dashed on over land and sea.

Then heavy, o'er-weighted clouds gave down
One sheet of drenching rain,
And the storm-king's terrible voice was heard
O'er valley, and hill, and plain;
And the hemlock bent to the sweeping blast,
And straighten'd not till the storm had passed,
And his distant rumbling moan
Came back as a dying groan.

Then over the valley, and city, and plain,
And over the mountain-crest,
The mist-wreaths lay in their purple glow,
As calm as an infant's rest;

And the moon shone out from her azure height,
And changed the deep gloom to a silver white,
And the stars looked down serene
Upon the peaceful scene.





WITHERED VIOLETS.

How well I remember,
That morn in September,
 We roamed where the violets bloom;
Where light zephyrs clove
Their way through the grove,
 All laden with richest perfume.

The flowers were bright
With the tears of the night—
 Their petals all sparkling with dew;
And the sun from the East
Drank the drops from the least
 Of the tendrils of purple and blue.

The brooklets were singing;
The valleys were ringing
 With the tinkling of many a bell;

The kine-herds were lowing,
As on they came, going
To graze the green grass in the dell.

The vines that were spread
All about overhead
Veiled the sun with an emerald screen;
Save one little ray
That had struggled its way
Thro' the masses of quivering green.

Down at our feet
Grew the violets sweet,
With delicate leaflet and hue.
I gathered them there
In that greenwood lair,
And shook off the diamonds of dew.

The flowers have withered I culled for my love;
That soul was not true to its vow.
Another has gathered the flower I prized,
And life is all desolate now.



A MORNING RAMBLE.

A MORNING in Spring! American Spring!
The golden orb of day rolls slowly up
The vaulted east, disbursing show'rs of light,
With prodigal extravagance, across
The green, dew-spangled meadows. Not a cloud
Mars all the blue of overhanging skies,
Save one sun-tinted, pearly flake, which fades,
And slowly grows extinct, far down the west;
While fanning breezes drift from southern climes,
As gently as the breath from angels' wings.

Come, roam with me across the fields, sweet
one;

Together we will quaff into our lungs
The clover-scented air, and dream of naught
But each the other. I will show to thee

The little violet, just peeping up
From out its mossy birth-couch; and I'll show
How 'tis an emblem of thy own sweet self—
The purple tint upon its velvet leaves
As chaste and delicate as are the thoughts
Of thy pure heart. The soft perfume which
floats

Above its fairy cup is far less sweet
Than thy rich breathing, when thou speak'st of
love.

Yon bush of snowy blooms, changed to a sheet
Of burnished silver 'neath the glancing light,
Is like thy brow, which sin has never stained.
The dainty penciling upon this leaf
Is like the silken fringe that veils the light
From thy dark eye.

Oh! Nature cannot be
More beautiful than woman in her pride!
For Nature fills the heart with life and joy;
But woman, in her purity, doth lift
The soul beyond the angels' sphere!

We've crossed
The mossy carpet of the meads, and now
Approach the wood. And hark! the blue-bird's
song

Chimes with the music of our hearts; and see!
The trees have caught the em'rald gleam of
Spring.

The buds spread timidly their tiny leaves,
And tinge to deeper hues beneath the sun;
Bees fill the air with dreamy murmuring;
And mottle-breasted robins add their songs.
The brown thrush ruffles up his little throat,
And warbles forth his flute-like melody;
And look! perched high above, on yonder bough,
The squirrel, chattering in comic rage,
As if to drive us from his sylvan home;
While far across the fields, where apple-blooms
Are quivering beneath the breeze, the quail
Is piping to his mate.

The Universe
Seems bursting into song! Dame Nature's harp
Is strung, and all the golden strings in tune;

And merrily our swelling hearts resound
To Nature's chimes.

Oh! is it not a boon—
A great God-given boon—these souls of ours,
That bend in adoration to the grand,
The beautiful, sublime, and wondrous works
Of Nature's wonderful Artificer?



MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.



MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE DOOMED CITY.

In peaceful rest the western city lay,
Unconscious of the gathering of doom;
The moon rolled on upon its silver way,
And, glancing down, half-smiled away the
gloom.
But, hark! Whence comes that wild and fear-
ful cry,
Which wakes the peaceful slumberer with
fright?
What means that awful glare against the sky,
That rises lurid on the brow of night?

It is the dreadful, deep-toned fire-bell,
 Which wakes the echoes with its wild alarm--
 That lurid glare against the sky doth tell
 The roused sleeper of impending harm.
 The besom of destruction onward came—
 A roaring, writhing, leaping sea of fire!
 On swept the life-devouring tongues of flame,
 And left behind but desolation dire!

Tongue cannot tell the deep despair and woe
 Which follow sudden loss of friends and home!
 Oh! Ye so wreck'd a few short hours ago,
 May God watch over you where'er you roam.
 And ye who life, health, home, and friends still
 hold,
 Oh! hearken to the cry of those in need;
 And God will prosper you a thousand-fold
 For every kind, unselfish word and deed.





WE'VE GONE THROUGH LIFE TOGETHER.

WE'RE growing old—my love and I—
The shades of life are nearing ;
We're drifting slowly down the tide,—
The other shore's appearing.
But life don't seem a worthless thing—
A joy now gone forever—
Because we've journeyed hand-in-hand,
And gone through life together.

And if, at times, our path grew dark,
We ne'er gave way to sorrow ;
Because we knew the sky would be
All clear again to-morrow.

Our youthful love has never waned—
Our hearts are young as ever;
And thus, for threescore years and ten,
We've gone through life together.

We've always lent a helping hand
To those who were in trouble;
The consciousness of duty done
Has more than paid us double.
We've passed the time allotted here;
And when from earth we sever,
We pray the Heav'nly gates to ope,
And take us both together.





NEVER DESPAIR.

Nil desperandum! Don't give up
When fickle Fortune does not fawn;
The darkest night will have an end,
And day will surely follow dawn.
The blackest cloud that ever rose
Will pass away, its fury spent;
And every sorrow we endure
Is by our Heav'nly Father sent.

The storm and sunshine both are giv'n
By One who knows our every need;
Each bitter grief some lesson proves,
If we are wise enough to heed.

What if the waves roll high and dark,
And with the storm we have to cope?
There's many a tide of battle turned
By Courage, hand-in-hand with Hope!

If friends forsake us in our need,
There's nothing gained by giving up;
The sweetest draught will sweeter be,
If we have drained the bitter cup.
For, Oh! how sweet the breath of Spring
When Winter-winds have taken flight;
And 'tis by contrast with the dark,
We learn the value of the light.

Nil desperandum! Struggle on!
And keep in view the promise-bow;
There's something in the future can
Atone for every present woe.





A SUMMER RHYME.

THE Spring has gone, and June is here—
The fairest month of all the year.

And down the hills
The little rills,
In frantic freaks,
Dash o'er the peaks,
And mingling with the drifting spray,
They join the river far away.

The mocking-bird,
With grateful trill,
Is cheerly heard
Along the hill.
The feather'd throng
Join in the song,
And waft the melodies along.

The roses bloom ;
 And sweet perfume
 Allures the bees
 To drain the lees
 Of blossoms pink and white.
 Come, wander with me, little maid,
 Along the edge of yonder glade,
 And 'neath a cloud of cooling shade
 I'll cull thee dainty flowers ;
 And blossoms sweet
 About thy feet
 Shall fall in feath'ry showers.
 The breeze shall come,
 And eager sip
 The honey from
 Thy dewy lip,
 Then lightly trip
 Away o'er mountain, hill, and dale,
 And over forest, field, and vale,
 To brush the dew
 From oak and yew,
 From meadow-grass
 And wild morass,

And scatter beads
Among the weeds
That lie beneath the waving reeds,
Where little fish,
With ne'er a wish
Beyond the ebb and flow of tides,
About the brooks,
In little nooks,
Turn up their flashing silver sides.
The Fay of Spring
Is on the wing,
And sweet perfume
Of flowers in bloom
Is floating over Winter's tomb.





ODD JOE, THE ORGAN-GRINDER.

You are right, friend; that organ is pretty well
worn—

I've heard it remarked before—

It wasn't quite new when it first came to me,
And *I've* had it five years or more.

Good-natured? Oh yes, sir; I try to seem gay;
I find it pays best to be so.

Queer chap? So the boys of the regiment
thought—

In the army they called me "Odd Joe."

Come away, Madeline; don't bother the gent

With your doleful "Pennies for food;"

You'll excuse her, my friend—it's a habit she's
got—

You see she don't mean to be rude.

My daughter? Oh yes, sir; that's my little girl;
She gathers the pennies, poor thing—
But Nell was the brave little soldier for gain,
Because she was pert and could sing.

She was brighter and fairer than this little one.
Yes, dead—thought I told you before.
Don't cry, Mad.; for, ever since Nellie is gone
You know I have loved you the more.

My arm, sir? At Richmond. Best one of the
two;
And this scratch I got there, as well:
I went down the first charge—Yes, I think it
was grape,
Or it might have been part of a shell.

That tune there that Maddy is playing you now,
We heard above all the commotion—
Ah! many a soul has gone up to its God
To the tune of "The Gem of the Ocean."

I havn't been good for much ever since then;
Ten months in a prison, shut out
From the world, and the light, and all tidings
of home,
Isn't likely to make a man stout.

When I came home at last—that's the worst of
it all—

My wife was gone! Dead?—Better dead!
She had left the two children in poverty, sir,
And with her false lover had fled!

Why leave *them* behind? Why, I'll tell you, my
friend;

Little Mad., there, looks very like me;
And her innocent face would have been a re-
proach

To the bad-hearted woman, you see.

For five years I've tramped it thro' country and
town,

And peered in each face that went by
There's a wrong to be righted—a sequel to come;
For I'll find one, or both, 'fore I die!

I am failing of late; and I'm troubled somewhat
With a pain near this bayonet-thrust.
But I'm proud of my scars; why, I'd give my
left arm
To save the Old Flag from the dust!

Are you weeping for me? Heaven bless you,
my friend;
But I'm glad that I've caused you a tear—
When you're standing up yonder, those tears may
outweigh
Half the sins you've committed down here..





MAGDALENE.

A Sequel to "Odd Joe."

WHY do the people stand gazing at me?
Some jeer—others pass with a frown.
It seems that the very dogs hush where I go—
Is poverty strange in the town?

Or do my worn features reveal my past life—
Can they read my sad history there?
Ah, me! Had they known me in happier days,
I'd think it no wonder they stare!

There wasn't a happier home in the land—
Ah! why for that man did I fall?
A few fleeting months—then he cast me away—
He sacrificed naught—I lost all.

It's the way of the world—I alone bear the
blame

For the blight of my life in its prime;
Yet it seems that the misery I have endured
Might almost atone for my crime!

Poor Joe! I have followed him month after
month,

Until they have grown into years;
But when I have almost the courage to speak,
My tongue is chained down by my fears.

My child! If I only dared speak to my child—
Just to press one kiss on her brow—
Poor Nellie! She died in his arms long ago—
Ah, well! she is happier now.

Joe doesn't look now like the strong, brave man
I loved ere I went to the bad—
Oh! I must not remember—my brain is on
fire—
Oh, horror! If I should go mad!

* * * * *

How lonely I am, standing here in the night,
In the presence of Conscience and God.
Not a friend have I now in the dark, wide
world—
Yes, death! There is rest 'neath the sod.

How mournful the sad river moans at my feet,
Rolling on to its grave in the sea.
One plunge—what a thought!—'neath the mur-
muring waves
Might wash out my past misery!

They say 'tis a quick and a painless death—
But after death? Ah! who can tell?
Oh! it cannot be worse than this torture of
mind—
I'll do it! God pardon! Farewell!





SMITHSONIAN PARK IN SPRING-TIME.

THE King of Light mounts to his Eastern throne,
Dispatching pursuivants with gleaming darts,
Commanding each to pierce proud Nature's heart,
And rouse it into breathing, throbbing life.
The southern breezes, laden with perfume
Of Spring's first offerings, invite me forth.
I heed the silent call. With book in hand,
I sally forth to walk within the park—
My usual haunt; and there I learn to read
The teachings of our God from Nature's book.
The sky above is one vast sheet of blue—
A blue so soft and delicate, it seems
As though it would dissolve before the sight.
My roving eye drops from the sky to earth,
And, oh! what wondrous beauties greet my view!
The graveled walks are lined with shading trees,

Whose leaning branches almost kiss the ground.
The white pine proudly heaves its verdant breast,
And points its new-formed, spear-like buds to
Heav'n.

The tall wild-cherry stretches forth its arms,
And waves its green-white blossoms to the breeze;
And when the fast-maturing fruit doth cut
The blossoms from the stem, it gently drops
The withered blooms upon the sod beneath.
The male catalpa showers to the ground
Its purple, bell-like flowers, making earth
Appear an em'rald carpet spangled o'er
With amethystine gems of beauty rare.
Beside low-growing pines, and underneath
Wide, overhanging boughs, are placed rude seats—
Rude wooden benches some, and others formed
Of stakes drove down into the solid earth
Till firmly set, with wooden plates atop.
To one of these my footstep leads, and here
I pause to gaze upon the lovely scene
That, like a living panorama, lies
Within my view.

Yon haughty, tow'ring tree
That lifts its lordly crest as if to top

The very clouds, and scarcely deigns to tilt
Its slender leaves before the western breeze,
The linden is. Majestical it stands,
And bends its head alone when tempests howl,
And blasts of fury, by the hurricane
Let loose, come crashing through its yielding
boughs.

And even then it hisses forth its scorn,
And fierce, sublime, defiant, casts away
The tatters rent from out its em'rald robe,
And challenges anew the angry winds.
And yet, proud as thou art, thou, too, canst be
As gentle as the Summer-evening breeze,
When all around is gentle, as 'tis now.

I turn my gaze away from yonder tree,
To watch two light-winged birds who flutter
near.

With merry chirp, they leave the branch o'er-
head,

And swiftly dart down to the ground; then steal,
With cautious step, toward me, pausing oft,
With foot uplifted high, and tiny heads
Bent either side, in comic watchfulness.

The boldest, with inquiring chirp, usurps
One half my rustic bench ; but startled at,
Perchance its own temerity, it flies
In haste away, and keeps at distance safe.
Chirp on, ye dainty harbingers of Heav'n,
I would not harm ye for Golconda's wealth.

How deep the solitude seems here, compared
With busy, noisy life beyond these gates.
A dreamy quiet hangs upon the air,
Unbroken, save by sighing winds among
The quiv'ring aspen-leaves. Yet faintly comes,
At times, the smothered din of busy life
Within the city's pale ; and thro' the trees
The city's turrets brightly glow, beneath
A flood of golden light.

Oh! how I love
To lie upon the soft, green earth, beneath
The overhanging boughs, and dream away
The morning-hours in meditative muse,
With just the faintest knowledge that the world—
The noisy, striving world without—exists!



WAITING FOR ANOTHER KISS.

How fondly I recall, sweet one,
That June-soft summer night
We sat together in the lane,
Beneath the mellow light

That glinted all the leafy boughs
Which quivered overhead,
And o'er thy lustrous, waving hair
A veil of silver spread.

Light zephyrs, from the distant wood,
Came, laden with perfume
Fresh caught from flow'rs that sought, in
vain,
To rival thy rich bloom.

The velvet grass, all dotted o'er
With drops of diamond dew,
Reflected twinkling stars who peep'd
From out their home of blue.

But brighter were thy sparkling eyes
A thousand times to me;
And sweeter far the loving kiss
I there received from thee,

Than perfume of a wilderness
Of flowers all in bloom—
Thy honeyed breath far sweeter than
Arabia's rich perfume.

I'm standing by the rustic seat,
Beyond the orchard-stile;
I'm waiting for thy regal step,
The sunlight of thy smile.

The sun has gone behind the hills,
But left a band of light
Across the cloudless western sky,
To keep at bay the night.

The evening dews are falling fast,
The birds have gone to sleep;
Yet still beside our trysting-place
My earnest watch I keep.

Oh! do not tarry longer! Fly
On wings of love to me—
I'm watching, waiting, dear one, for
Another kiss from thee.





A QUANDARY.

I'd give a world could I but know
If e'er she thinks of me ;
Or if her love be all for him,
Or if her heart be free.
She trembles when I take her hand,
The crimson comes and goes
Upon her cheek, like sunny rays
Upon the Summer-rose.

And yet she oft coquets with him,
And he, of course, with her ;
While I, poor martyr to my love,
Dare not a word demur.
I wonder would she love me more
If I had wealth and fame ?
If she were poor, I know that I
Would love her all the same.

Sometimes she sweetly smiles, and then
My heart is all ablaze.
Ah! who could keep from loving her
Who has such winning ways?
And yet she just as sweetly smiles
On him, when he is near,
And then my heart is ice again—
She loves him most, I fear!

What shall I do to win her love,
Or end this fearful strife?
Shall I begin to tear my hair,
And vow to end my life,
By plunging madly from the dome
Of our great capitol?
No—that would leave the field to him,
And that would cap-it-all.

You see I'm in a deuced fix!
I know not what to do
To rid me of this constant pain
That gnaws my heart; do you?

I'll go at once and ask her if
She loves me? And if "No!"
I think the best thing I can do
Is—just to let her go!





SKATING PLEASURES.

THERE is nothing so pretty in all the wide world
As a beautiful girl on the ice—
Though any maid robed in a skating costume,
Of course, must look pretty and nice.
How smoothly she glides o'er the silvery sheen,
And gracefully bends to and fro,
With a motion as light as the dip of a bird,
Her bright eyes and cheeks all aglow.

And if it should happen to be her first trial,
How confiding she leans on your arm;
While the ripple of water is music less sweet
Than her sharp little shrieks of alarm.
How delightful to pick the dear little one up,
Just after each comical tumble—
So gratefully smiling, provokingly sweet,
That your heart will be all in a jumble.

A skating-pond, too, on a clear, stilly night,
With the merry stars twinkling above,
And the moon looking down with encouraging
smile,

Is an excellent place to make love.
For example, she calls you a "darling gallant;
What a trouble to you she must be!"
Then whisper, you'd "think it no trouble at all
To be troubled for life." Do you see?

Then there is the lacing and unlacing skates,
And thousands of other delights;
Besides the walk home, with the angelic one
In the dim of the star-lighted nights.
And then when you bid her good-night at the
door,

Sweet words you can breathe in her ear—
If I didn't love Summer, I almost could wish
That skating would last all the year.





IS IT WRONG TO KISS ?

THE frolicsome waves love to kiss the white
sand,

The zephyrs salute the green trees ;
The golden sunbeams kiss the beautiful rose
As it blushinglly nods to the breeze.

The daisy—most lowly and modest of flowers—
Receives a night-kiss from the dew,
And the winds touch the lips of the “emblem
of love”—

The violet, of purple and blue.

The silvery moonbeams salute the hill-tops,
The hill-shadows kiss the blue sea ;
And the bright little waves dance, caper, and
sing,

For a star-kiss from over the lea.

The tear-drops of heaven fall gently to earth
 To kiss the green grass; and in May
 The buds burst their tendrils in joy to receive
 A kiss from the Ruler of Day.

The birds kiss each other and twitter good-
 night,
 The clouds kiss the mist on the hill;
 The grape-vine embraces the old cherry-tree,
 And the pebbles are kissed by the rill.

The ivy-vine clambers the moss-covered wall
 To get the first sip of the dew—
 If Nature, then, seems only born to be kissed,
 I don't think it wrong, love. Do you?





MODERN WEDDING-RITES.

"WILT thou take this brown-stone front,
These carriages—this diamond,
To be the husband of thy choice,
Fast locked in bonds of Hymen?
And wilt thou leave thy home and friends
To be his loving wife?
And help to spend his large income
So long as thou hast life?"

"I will!" the modest maid replies,
The love-light beaming in her eyes.

"And wilt thou take this waterfall,
This ostentatious pride,
And all these unpaid milliners' bills,
To be thy chosen bride?"

And wilt thou love and cherish her
While thou hast life and health;
But die as soon as possible,
And leave her all thy wealth?"

"I will!" the fearless swain replies,
And eager waits the nuptial-ties.

"Then I pronounce you man and wife;
And whom I've joined forever,
The next best man may disunite,
And the first Divorce Court sever."





A CHILD'S LOGIC.

A BABY girl knelt down to pray
One morn. The mother said:
"My love, why do we ever say,
'Give us our *daily* bread?'—

"Why ask not for a week or more?"
The baby bent her head
In thoughtful mood toward the floor—
"We want it *fresh*!" she said.





AFTER THE PLAY.

Drop the curtain—let's away,
The scene of mimic-life is done;
Joy to the hero of the play,
The villain's race is run.

Put out the lights, and close the book,
And hide it in its usual nook;
The players need its aid no more—
Their hour of toil is o'er.

Yes, drop the curtain—let them go,
And doff their gaudy stage array;
The flashing gems would scarcely show
Against the light of day.

Some brief applause they may have gained,
By mirth-provoking look or word;
What care we that the mirth was feigned?
The heart may cry unheard.

Ah, well! the cheer the world may give
Are flowers strewn along their way;
Oh! may the memory ever live
To soothe their darkest day.



THE FEVER DREAM.



THE FEVER DREAM.

A SONG-CYCLE.

PROLOGUE.

THE poet writhed upon his bed
In agony of pain—
Through all his frame a fever sped
That seemed to sear his brain.
He grasped the cup of agony
And drained it to the lees,
And when the fever ebbed away
His life began to freeze.
An Angel swept the pain away,
And soothed him on her breast;
His mind forsook the earthy clay—
The Dream will speak the rest.



THE DREAM.—CUPID'S FOLLY.

I.—DISCONTENT.

YOUNG Cupid stood, musing, one day in Heaven,
Beneath the soft shade of a tree;
A rivulet laving his bare little feet,
And bright flowers brushing his knee.

“I am idle in Heaven—there’s little to do—
If I could I would speedily flee it.
’Tis whispered in Heaven, a new world is built;
And, oh! I am longing to see it!
I’ll spin me a rope, and I’ll braid it of gold—”
And his cunning eye twinkled with mirth—
“And I’ll wheedle St. Peter to open the gate,
And I’ll swing myself quickly to Earth!”

Then he braided a rope, and a girdle he spun,
And wrought a new quiver of gold,
And sprinkled it over with violet dew,
And filled it with darts, new and old;
And he caught a stray sunbeam, and made a
new bow;
Then his cunning eye twinkled with mirth—
“Now I’ll wheedle St. Peter to open the gate,
And I’ll swing myself down to the Earth!”

II.—THE REQUEST.

“St. Peter, tell me, is it true
A new world has been built?
I long to see it—let me through,
And ask me what thou wilt!”

“Begone, young sir! Tempt not thy fate!
I may not let thee out—
The few who enter by this gate
Ne’er wish to turn about.”

"I've heard it is a world most rare;
To view it, oh ! I burn!
Pray set the golden gate ajar—
One look, and I'll return."

"What hast thou 'neath thy mantle, sir?"
St. Peter questioned stern.
"I have my bow and quiver, sir,
And darts of silver fern.

"I have this cord of braided gold,—
I'll fix it to the gate,
And when thou dost the door unfold
I'll aid thee with my weight."

III.—THE FLIGHT.

St. Peter slept,
Young Cupid wept—
In vain he sought the key the keeper kept.
The lock was turned;
His young heart yearned
To view the world of which he late had learn'd.

He pulled the rope,
But could not hope
To make the mighty golden portal ope.

At last there came an outward stroke;
Upon the air of Heaven it broke;
St. Peter heard the sound and quickly woke.

“Who knocks so late
Upon the gate,—
So loud and oft, as though ye cannot wait?”

Then Cupid grasp'd his braided rope,
And when the massive gate did ope,
His eye shone bright with cunning mirth,
And quick he swung himself to Earth. •
But as he fled his home of late
His mantle clung upon the gate.
“So much the better,” Cupid said;
“I'm freer now to use my head.”

IV.—MISCHIEF.

Young Cupid flitted o'er the mead,
Across the orchard lane;
The hills began to hide the sun,
And day began to wane.
A maiden sat beneath a tree,
Beneath the blossoms sweet,
And Cupid shook the blossoms down
About her pretty feet.

He threw a dart,
It struck her heart,
She writhed in agony;
He drew the dart
From out her heart,
And laughed in merry glee.

"I'll come again
To heal the pain,
And rhyme thee love with dove;
I go away,
Am gone a day,
And bring thee love for love."

V.—REPARATION.

A youth, made brown with ceaseless toil,
Slow trod behind the plow,
With crystal beads of honest toil
Slow dripping from his brow.
And as he trod
The mellow sod,
A merry song he sung;
His heart was light,
His eye was bright,
Care to the wind he flung.

Then Cupid raised a flaming dart,
And held it high aloft.
In sweet perfumes
Of apple-blooms
He dipt it once and oft.
He threw the dart,
It pierced his heart,
He writhed in agony;
He drew the dart
From out his heart,
And laughed in merry glee.

He lured him to the maiden's side,
And gave her to him for his bride.
Her eye became
A living flame,
 A sun-kissed drop of dew;
He brought a love
That rhymed with dove,
 And far away he flew.

VI.—REMORSE.

Young Cupid lay upon a mound,
 Among the waving hollies;
And, prone upon the dewy ground,
 Bewailed his wanton follies.
The night was dark,
And not a spark
 Shone from the gloomy sky;
The wind was chill,
And whistled shrill,
 Like wail of infant cry.

Young Cupid mourned his mantle lost;
His hair upon the breeze was tost;
The frosty dew
Upon him grew,
And turned his limbs a purple hue.

Then Cupid started from the ground,
And stood among the hollies,
And stamped his foot upon the mound,
And said: "I'll mend my follies!
I'll straight return to Peter's gate,
And ne'er again offend;
For, though I've learned my folly late,
'Tis ne'er too late to mend!"

VII.—HUMILIATION.

"St. Peter, ope the gate again,
And hearken to my tale of pain:
My wings are wet with misty rain,
My limbs are chill,
The wind blows shrill;
I bow me to thy wiser will.

Pray ope the door!
My folly o'er,
The truant I will be no more."

"Who prays to enter here so late—
And knocks so timid on the gate?
The keeper hath no need be proud—
If you have right, knock bold and loud."

St. Peter turned the golden lock,
And sprang the bolt with mighty shock.
He girded tight his golden belt;
And swung the gate apart;
And on the threshold Cupid knelt,
With ne'er a bow or dart.

VIII.—THE DECREE.

"St. Peter, let me in, I pray;
I come in deep repentance."
"Young Cupid, rise and haste away,
I cannot change thy sentence!"

Thou hast committed grievous sin—
A crime ne'er done by mortal—
Therefore, thou must not come within
The shadow of this portal
Until thy sin thou hast atoned,
And true repentance proved.
Thy name will ne'er in Heaven be owned
Till all the world hath loved!

“Go, seek again thy golden bow,
And find thy truant dart;
And wander ever to and fro,
And pierce each mortal heart.

“To roam for ages be thy lot
Thus, naked through the world below;
But heat or cold shall harm thee not,
Or ever warp thy dart, or bow.
This be thy comfort in thy fall:
Thy will is law—Love conquers all!”

St. Peter closed the golden gate,
And left young Cupid to his fate.

"My sin hath fall'n upon my head;
My punishment is just," he said.
But as he took his Earthward flight,
He vowed to be a merry wight;
And speedily his power prove,
And quickly bring the world to love.
And if his power failed with any,
Then many should love one—one many.











